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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development and validation of the Perception of Parents Scale (POPS), which was designed to measure the transformation in parent-child relations from the initial positions of authority and obedience to the mature position of mutual reciprocity. A 51-item, 4-point Likert scale was designed. Items were divided into three classes dealing with relationships with parents, mothers, and fathers. The scale was administered to 132 university students (85 females, 47 males), 18-25 years old. Analyses of item means and variance yielded a final 43-item scale. Scales of self-esteem, locus of control, and choice of an adult consultant for advice were used to examine construct validity. Analysis of variance on POPS scores revealed that students who scored high on the POPS for transformation of the parent-child relationship were more likely than other children to choose adults as consultants when they needed advice. These children also had higher self-esteem and were less likely to attribute circumstances to powerful others than were low-scoring students. Ongoing studies of the POPS are briefly reviewed and the original 51 items in the POPS are listed. (BC)

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Perception of Parents Scale: Development and Validation

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the development and validation of a new scale, named "Perception of Parents Scale" (POPS), designed to tap a transformation toward perceived mutual respect in parent-child relations. Based on Youniss' theory (1980;1983), an initial pool of 51 items, with three subscales (general parents, mother, and father), was administered to 132 single undergraduates. Consultant choice, self-esteem, and locus of control were employed to examine construct validity. Cronbach alpha on a reduced scale of 43 items indicated a reliable measure. Factor analysis of the scale yielded three interpretable factors. There was no significant sex difference for scale scores. A one-way ANOVA using a median split on POPS scores revealed that students with transformed relations were more likely to choose adults as consultants, had higher self-esteem, and were less likely to attribute circumstances to powerful others.

INTRODUCTION

The object of this project is the development of a new scale that describes adolescents'/young adults' perception of their relationships with parents. Interest in developing such a scale stems from both theoretical and applied concerns. From the theoretical perspective, the scale will attempt to tap a phenomenon described by Youniss and Smollar (1985). Youniss' theory of social relations (1980), integrates the work of Piaget and Sullivan. He proposed that the initial parent-child relationship is essentially asymmetrical in nature (i.e., the parent is in the position of authority whereas the child's position is one of obedience). However, as the child matures and interacts with peers, he learns about equality in relationships through the social interaction procedures of negotiating, compromise, sharing, etc. Youniss believes that the symmetrical nature of peer relations is then used to transform the child-parent relationship into one of mutual reciprocity. This transformation primarily takes place during

adolescence and young adulthood, a time of increased autonomy and, according to Erikson, identity formation and the establishment of intimacy.

From a practical or applied perspective, the adolescent's and young adult's relationship with his/her parents is an important component of his/her social-support network, a vital mediator of stress (Chiriboga, Coho, Stein, and Roberts, 1979). Furthermore, psychological problems as well as suicide rate in adolescents and young adults have been increasing (Steinberg, 1989). It is hypothesized that the extent to which relations with parents become reciprocal will influence willingness to consult parents or other adults concerning issues of relevance (Wintre, Hicks, McVey, & Fox, 1988).

The work of Youniss and Smollar is based on intensive, individual interviews. However, it is proposed that the perception of parental relationships can be tapped via an objective, group-administered questionairre. The scale has been named the Perception of Parents Scale (POPS).

METHOD
SUBJECTS

A scale was formulated with the items gleaned from the relevant literature. The items represent various areas and values present in the parent-child relationship documented by Youniss and Smollar (1985) to reflect transformed parental relationships.

Items were rated by Ss on a four-point Likert scale, reflecting the degree of agreement/disagreement towards a given item. The initial pool consisted of 51 items, worded both positively and negatively in order to avoid response sets. These items were divided into three:

a) overall parent/adult relationship,
b) relationship with mother,
c) relationship with father.

This original scale was administered to 132 Ss, 85 females and 47 males, who were single university students, between the ages of 18 and 25 (M = 20.04).

Item analysis and selection was accomplished using two criteria:

1) item-total correlation

2) Cronbach's alpha measure of an internal-consistency coefficient.

The second criteria for item selection serves to demonstrate reliability as well (Cronbach, 1970; Nunnally, 1978). Item means were analyzed to ensure that they were not in the extreme, and item variance was checked in order to confirm that there is variation in each item. Based on these criteria, a final 43-item scale was yielded.

A factor analysis was completed on the data in order to ascertain either the unidimensionality of the scale or the theoretical connectedness between factors. Factors were identified and labelled appropriately.

Three scales, conceptually related to the transformation construct, were used to examine construct validity:

1) Self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). It was predicted that transformed subjects would possess higher self-esteem.

2) Locus of control (Levenson, 1974). It was predicted that Ss with transformed relationships would attribute less control to powerful others and have a higher internal locus.

3) Consultant choice (Wintre et al., 1988). It was predicted that there would be a tendency toward preference for adult consultants as transformation increases.

RESULTS

Scale scores could range from 0-129 (i.e., 43x4 {maximum score}= 172-43=129). Actual scores ranged between 21 and 126 (M=74.64 s.d.=21.03).

The alpha reliability of the overall scale was 0.938, and when broken down into theorized subscales, the results were as follows:

a) General scale: alpha=0.8104
b) Mother scale: alpha=0.9173
c) Father scale: alpha=0.9205

Factor analysis of the individual items yielded that the general scale and the mother scale, best loaded as a single factor (23 items). The second factor reflects relationships with fathers (16 items). These two factors included all items except for four which consisted of two pairs of parallel items which regarded mother and father separately. This factor is identified as ideological issues (in relation to politics and religion). It is important to note that all four items also loaded highly on their related subscales. POPS correlated positively with self-esteem scores, $r = .1957$, $p < .05$ (two tailed). Results from the median split ANOVA revealed a significant relationship between higher transformation scores and a decrease in attribution to powerful others as external locii of control, $F = 3.961$, $p = .048$. In consultant choices, there was a significant increase in utilizing adults as the first choice of consultants , $F = 5.477$, $p = .021$. There was also an increased incidence of using adults as both first and second choices, $F = 7.331$, $p = .043$.

DISCUSSION

The POPS scale appears to be reliable. Regardless of whether employed as a single scale or broken down into separate subscales, all alphas remained at highly acceptable levels. Given that the resultant subscales have theoretical connection, it is not problematic that separate factors were derived. One intriguing aspect, however, is that the "general" items and the "mother" items loaded on one factor, separate from the factor consisted of "father" items. This would seem to indicate that one's perceptions of adults in general most closely reflects attitudes towards one's mother.

The construct validity indicators confirmed most of our hypotheses. There was a positive correlation between self-esteem and POPS scores. This implies that as one's image of self improves, the mutuality of parental relationships also increases. While it was hypothesized that subjects with transformed relationships would be directly related to an internal locus of control and inversely related to powerful others, only a

significant inverse relationship between POPS and powerful others was established. This finding confirms that as parent/child relationships transform, the child attributes events less to authority figures, reflecting a perception of diminished adult control. This may exist independently of an internal locus of control. The individual may still attribute some events to chance occurences.

The area of consultant choice offers the most powerful validation. Results revealed that Ss with high scores on the transformation scale consult more frequently with adults in general (i.e., either familiar or expert) as their first choice, and when first and second choices are combined. This seems to reflect their increased comfort in relationships with adults and supports the concept of mutual reciprocity being crucial in youths' consideration of adults as viable consultant choices.

It is also important to note that there were no sex differences with regard to scores on POPS. As a result, the measure seems to be equally applicable to both sexes. It appears that although many sex differences exist in the

manner in which adolescent/young adults relate to their parents, there is not a significant difference in the degree to which males or females transform their relationships with significant adults in their lives.

In summary, comparisons with variables hypothesized to be theoretically related seem to provide initial support that the scale is a valid measure of the transformation construct.

CURRENT RESEARCH

A second study is presently underway for several reasons:

a) Cross-replication/Cross-validation.

b) Criterion validity. An interview was formulated based on Youniss' literature which should tap the same construct as POPS. It was administered to 56 Ss (34 F, 22 M) who also completed POPS, with male and female interviewers interviewing half of the Ss of each gender. Upon scoring, the two will be correlated.

c) Test-retest reliability. 98 Ss completed POPS on two occasions (2 weeks apart). A test-retest coefficient will be calculated.

d) Establishing validity. Several measures, including POPS (with a 6-point Likert scale), were given to an additional 270 single university students under age 27. A measure to establish discriminant validity is the Social Desirability Scale by Crowne and Marlowe (1964) and it is predicted that this will have a low correlation with

POPS. Several scales have been identified that should provide further measures of construct validity. The self-esteem, locus of control and consultant choice scales are again being used. Additional scales include;

1) attachment to parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) as measured by the parent portion of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA);

2) emotional autonomy (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986) as measured by the Emotional Autonomy Scale;

3) attitude to private personal authority (Lapsley, Harwell, Olson, Flannery, & Quintana, 1984), as measured by a semantic differential technique of ten bipolar adjective scales (Johnson, Hogan, Zonderman, Callens, & Rogolsky, 1981).

P.O.P.S. (GENERAL)

* Items marked with an asterisk were deleted from final 43 item scale

*1. I have learned to value in others the experience that comes with age.

*2. Whoever said you can't trust anyone over thirty, sure knew what he/she was talking about.

3. Parents don't share their opinions with you, they tell you what to do.

4. Parents advise you what's good for them and not what's good for you.

5. There is mutual respect between me and my parents even in areas in which we disagree.

6. My parents would never consider discussing their problems with me.

7. I seldom consider discussing my problems with my parents.

*8. My opinions have seldom differed so much from those of my parents that it caused conflict between us.

When it comes to talking to others, just to be able to clarify my thoughts, I can

*9. talk to my friends

10. talk to my mother

11. talk to my father

I used to think of my parents as having all the answers. Now . . .

12. I can hardly stand to hear their opinions.

*13. I prefer to think of them this way.

14. I can listen to their opinions and put them in perspective.

*15. I am uncomfortable talking to people my parents' age.

P.O.P.S. (MOTHER)

1. My mother gives me a lot more space than she did before.

*2. My mother will always look at me as her baby.

3. I often feel that my mother is talking "at" me and not with me.

4. My mother and I can enjoy each other's company and participate in shared activities.

5. I feel that my mother is approachable to discuss problems within our family.

6. My mother is reluctant expressing her doubts and fears with me.

7. Mutual respect is a term that I can use to describe my relationship with my mother.

8. I am able to be myself with my mother.

9. I am usually very cautious about what I say to my mother.

10. When I try to share my concerns with my mother, her response usually makes me sorry I began the conversation.

11. I can communicate as well with my mother as I can with my friends.

My mother and I can meaningfully discuss the following issues:

12. politics

13. my relationship with a significant other

14. career decisions

15. religion

16. sexual relations

17. university decisions

18. personal views on femininity/masculinity

P.O.P.S. (FATHER)

1. My father gives me a lot more space than he did before.

*2. My father will always look at me as his baby.

3. I often feel that my father is talking "at" me and not with me.

4. My father and I can enjoy each other's company and participate in shared activities.

5. I feel that my father is approachable to discuss problems within our family.

6. My father is comfortable expressing his doubts and fears with me.

7. Mutual respect is a term that I can use to describe my relationship with my father.

8. I am able to be myself with my father.

9. I am usually very cautious about what I say to my father.

10. When I try to share my concerns with my father, his response usually makes me sorry I began the conversation.

11. I can communicate as well with my father as I can with my friends.

My father and I can meaningfully discuss the following issues:

12. politics

13. my relationship with a significant other

14. career decisions

15. religion

16. sexual relations

17. university decisions

18. personal views on femininity/masculinity